

EAST MICHIGAN AVENUE BRIDGE

HAER No. MI-75

Spanning the Kalamazoo River,
approximately 1,000 feet East of Galesburg
Galesburg vicinity
Kalamazoo County
Michigan

HAER
MICH
39-GALES.
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

EAST MICHIGAN AVENUE BRIDGE

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HAER No. MI -75

Location: East Michigan Avenue, spanning the Kalamazoo River, Approximately 1,000 feet East of Galesburg, Galesburg Vicinity, Kalamazoo County, Michigan.

UTM: 16.631770.4682820
Quad: Galesburg, Michigan

Date of Construction: 1923

Contractor: William Marshall and Son, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Present Owner: Kalamazoo County Road Commission

Present Use: Vehicular Traffic

Significance: The East Michigan Avenue Bridge is one of only three camelback bridges left on the Michigan Department of Transportation inventory list and is the second largest in the state. The sister bridge to this one was Mosel Avenue Bridge which was taken down in 1990.

Project Information: This documentation was undertaken in February, 1994, in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement by the Michigan Department of Transportation as a mitigative measure prior to the replacement of the bridge.

Michael R. DeVries
Project Engineer
Wightman and Associates, Inc.
920 Broad Street
St. Joseph, MI 49085

The East Michigan Avenue Bridge is a concrete camelback bridge constructed in 1923. The bridge was built by William Marshall and Son, a general contractor out of Grand Rapids. The bridge was jointly funded by the Federal Government, the State Highway Department and the Board of Kalamazoo County Road Commission, at a cost of \$41,406.

The bridge has a total length of 210 feet, consisting of a center span of 90 feet and two side spans of 60 feet. It was built with a 22 foot roadway and no provisions for pedestrians. In 1941, a timber walk on metal supports was attached to the structure's south side.

The bridge is located in Charleston Township about 1,000 feet east of the City of Galesburg. It carries East Michigan Avenue across the Kalamazoo River on an east by southeast alignment.

Within Charleston Township, the Kalamazoo River can only be crossed at the East Michigan Avenue bridge. The river separates the northwestern one-third of the Township from the remainder.

Before the bridge was built, there was no road at this location and access to Galesburg from the southeast was provided by a truss bridge located about 0.2 miles west on Climax Drive. The truss bridge remained open until 1968. It collapsed in 1981, but has not been replaced.

Because this is the only bridge in the area that crosses the Kalamazoo River, the East Michigan Avenue Bridge serves the needs of many people. Much of the land northwest of the river is rural with a low population density. However, in Galesburg, there is commercial, light industrial and medium density residential land use. West of the project on McColem Street and East Michigan Avenue, there are firms with active truck operations.

Of the portion of the Township southeast of the river, nearly 40 percent is occupied by the Fort Custer Military Reservation and State Recreation Area. This portion also contains several subdivisions and a significant amount of prime agricultural land. Two subdivisions are located near the river west of 38th Street. At the intersection of Fort Custer Drive and East Michigan Avenue, there is a convenience store and just to the east, a mobile home park. The East Michigan Avenue bridge is an important factor for transportation to all the noted businesses and families living in the area.

At times, this bridge also serves the need for many travelers as well. The segment of East Michigan Avenue over the Kalamazoo River is on the Freeway Incident Management Plan for U.S. Interstate 94. As a component of the plan, it is an alternate route for expressway traffic in case closure of U.S. Interstate 94 is necessary between exists 85 and 88. This segment of U.S. Interstate 94 currently carries nearly 38,000 vehicles per day including a large percentage of trucks.

The significance of this structure is that it is one of only three camelback bridges left on the Michigan Department of Transportation Inventory List. This particular bridge is the second largest in the State. The largest camelback bridge, U.S. 12 over St. Joseph River was turned into a roadside park in 1991. Mosel Avenue Bridge, a sister bridge to the East Michigan Avenue Bridge, was taken down in 1990, and a new bridge was put in its place.

"As-Built" Plans B1 of 39-3-2, October, 1922, Michigan State Highway Department, obtained from Kalamazoo County Road Commission.

References

Michigan's Highway Bridges: History and Assessment by Charles K. Hyde, Department of History, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

Narrative History of East Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo County
Source: Charleston Township Historical Society, Charleston Township, Michigan.

"As-Built" Plans B1 of 39-3-2, October, 1922, Michigan State Highway Department, obtained from Kalamazoo County Road Commission.

